

MSFC Safety *Bulletins*

Office Chair Incident: It Could Have Been Worse...



Type of Chair



Method of Attachment



Point of Failure



How it Failed

What Happened? An employee was working on his computer, while seated in a chair that he'd used for several months. It was a typical office chair, with 5 legs on casters and a swivel seat. He leaned back in the chair to stretch, and the chair back broke off under the pressure. Both the chair back and the employee fell backward. Fortunately, the furniture behind the employee was far enough away so that he didn't hit his head on anything!

What Was The Cause of This Incident? The incident investigation revealed that brackets are welded to the chair arms and back, and bolted beneath the swivel seat. The failure occurred in the weld where the bracket attaches to the chair arm. These welds are very difficult to see, because the seat cushion covers them.

What Can Be Done? Employees who have office chairs with casters and a swivel seat, similar to the one in the photo above, should take time to examine the chair. Turn it over and make sure the bolts attaching the seat to the base are secure. (See "Office Safety – Chair" on the SHE Safety Bulletin Web Page.) If possible, inspect the brackets attaching the arms and back to the chair seat, looking for signs of metal fatigue.

If you have questions about the safety of your chair, contact the Logistics Services Department at 544-4775.